

# FIREFIGHTER

JUNE 2005



Fire Brigade  
Workers deserve  
DECENT PENSIONS



# Imperative for the union

It is a great honour to be elected General Secretary of the FBU after over 20 years representing members. I thank everyone who participated in the ballot. With over 40% of members voting – very high compared to ballots in other unions – it showed the importance which you attached to the result.

It was a hard fought campaign. But a job that is not worth fighting for is not worth having.

I have exchanged thanks with the former General Secretary Andy Gilchrist who has wished both me and the union all the best for the future. I would also like to pay tribute to Andy for his many years of work on behalf of FBU members.

He and I may disagree about other things, but we both agree that it is imperative for the union to unite to face the challenges ahead.

## Strength of purpose

The FBU is the only union in the fire service with the unity and strength of purpose to face up to those challenges. We are the only UK-wide organisation in the fire service which has a clear and agreed agenda alongside the strength of purpose to promote and campaign for that agenda.

And we will be campaigning for that agenda in a new context. Labour has been re-elected to government with a substantially reduced yet – by historical standards – a large majority.

The Prime Minister Tony Blair has said he will learn the lessons learned during the course of the general election campaign. One of those lessons must be that attacking public services and those who work in them goes down very badly with Labour's natural constituency, what the poll pundits call the "core" support.

We shall see if those lessons have been learned or if it is simply more of the same old New Labour. There is nothing wrong with us taking the words of the Prime Minister with a very heavy pinch of salt.

Like the FBU, there have been changes at the top. In the new government the fire service is still located within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister although now it has two Cabinet Ministers – John Prescott and David Miliband – instead of the usual one. Nick Raynsford has gone, as have all of the other junior ministers and some of the civil servants who were there during our dispute.

It does give an opportunity for a fresh start at national political level. Both the union and government have now seen major changes in personnel since our dispute.

This gives us all an opportunity to turn the



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ahead, says General  
Secretary Matt Wrack

page and start anew. I hope the Government will grasp that opportunity.

## Campaigning priorities

Pensions are top of my agenda. Many of you took an active part in the campaign which brought the government to the negotiating table. Now time will tell if the government's change of position was simply a ploy to stop an embarrassing public sector pension strike in the run up to a general election or if the promised negotiations will be the genuine article.

A critical point for the future is for the public service unions to build on the joint approach which moved the government position. Yes, there were problems with the date for the one day strike action (the teaching unions, for example, found it difficult to join in as it was very close to half-term).

The FBU will work more closely with the other public sector unions to build a stronger united front rather than allowing ourselves to be picked off separately. If we need to pick up the pace of our campaign we all hope you can play your part.

Our annual conference made clear we are keeping all our options open if we fail to reach a settlement which is acceptable to our members.

## Control campaign

Our campaign against the regionalisation of emergency fire control rooms in England and Scotland has made a real impact with the public and with local fire authorities. Your brigades and regions have played a key part in that campaign.

We have raised serious and well-based professional concerns. The government has completely failed to address these concerns.

The campaign will now be strengthened, deepened and stepped up. 900 of our members face losing their jobs. We will not let Government – and it is they who will be making the decisions – pick on and pick off 900 members of this union and introduce new systems which will damage the fire service.

We will continue to campaign to stop the closure of all emergency fire control rooms in England and Scotland. The annual conference agreed to step up all aspects of this vital campaign and made very clear that we would be keeping all our options open if the government ignores our concerns and decides to press ahead.

# to unite

## Retained duty system

As general secretary I will represent your professionalism and the pride with which you serve your communities. And I know you have specific concerns as well as those which concern all of us.

The union's basic view will not change: a firefighter is a firefighter. We will continue to strive to ensure that the status you are held in within those communities is properly reflected within the fire service.

The fire service will never be modern as long as old-fashioned prejudices against those who work the retained duty system remain. That includes proper access to training and equipment and the right to a pension.

Our campaign to tackle the shortage of retained firefighters will continue. Our legal action to secure your right to a pension will also continue and we expect that case to be heard in the House of Lords this autumn.

## The strength of our officers

This union is greatly strengthened by our officer members. The highly professional knowledge and expertise of officer members adds to the strength of our voice and the voice of the communities we serve.

It is also a voice we utilise on many specialist committees, particularly at national level and especially when dealing with fire service issues with government departments. This also gives our officer members an input at national level on fire service issues which they would otherwise not have.

We will continue to use that expertise and to ensure the professional voice of our officer members remains strong within the union and within the corridors of power in Whitehall, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.

## Fighting cuts

Instead of being risk-based, Local Integrated Risk Management plans are too often simply cuts-based. No one in this union believes that job losses and fire service cuts leads to a better service.

Cuts in jobs and vital life-saving equipment impact on the safety of firefighters and the public. The FBU are not the only ones to have serious concerns.

The campaign against job cuts and for a national standard for fire and rescue emergency response planning will be stepped up. Every job cut leaves us and the public less safe.

That is the essential message we need to get across brigade by brigade. We will take that message as part of a joined-up campaign into

**The FBU will work more closely with the other public sector unions to build a stronger united front rather than allowing ourselves to be picked off separately. If we need to pick up the pace of our campaign we all hope you can play your part.**

the Parliaments in London and Edinburgh, the Welsh Assembly and in Northern Ireland.

We cannot simply sit back and let managers, prompted by government, salami slice the fire service year after year. From now on we fight back across the board and in a more cohesive, developed and intensive way.

## Your union

The union has taken knocks. So have members. Central to my job is rebuilding the confidence of members in their union and our ability to effectively fight back over attacks on our service and for us to set the agenda for the future of that service.

Some members have been lost. One of my priorities will be to strengthen our membership and encourage any who have left in the last couple of years to consider rejoining. In the UK fire service the FBU are the only serious players in town.

Our finances have also taken some knocks. One of my first priorities is putting our finances on a sound footing and this I will do.

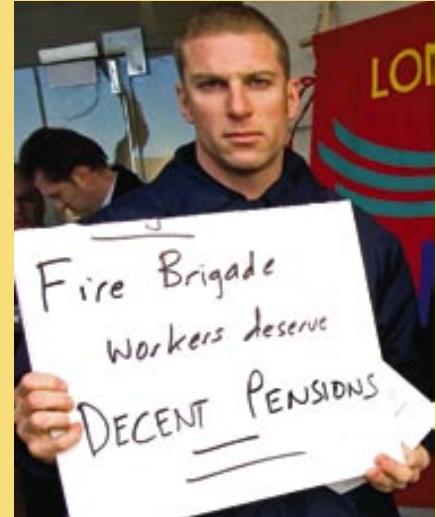
For most members the most important person in the union is not the general secretary. It is the local FBU rep you see either every day or when an issue needs dealing with.

For you, the local rep is the "face" of the union.

We will strive to ensure that your local reps remain well trained and, in the future, better supported. I hope that you will come to see me as an extension of that local rep working and campaigning hard for you at a national level.

The "leadership" of a union can help set its strategic approach and direction, although always subject to the democratic process. It is not the Matt Wrack Fire Brigades Union, it is your union and it always will be.

I look forward to working with our national team to ensure we are all serving you to the best of our ability.



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# Matt Wrack elected General Secretary

MATT Wrack has been elected General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union. He defeated Andy Gilchrist in a secret postal ballot conducted by Electoral Reform Balloting services in which over 40% of members voted.

Votes cast: 20,663

Spoilt: 571

Matt Wrack 12,883 (63.9%)

Andy Gilchrist 7,259 (36.1%)

Matt Wrack said: "I am enormously proud to be elected and thank everyone who participated in the ballot. I congratulate Andy Gilchrist on a hard fought campaign.

"We now need to unite and face the challenges ahead. The FBU is the only union in the fire service with the unity and strength of purpose to face up to those challenges.

"As general secretary I will represent all members of the FBU, our professionalism and the pride with which we serve our communities. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and getting down to that work."

Outgoing General Secretary Andy Gilchrist said: "I congratulate Matt on his election and I wish him the best for the future. At the end of a hard fought campaign the members have spoken and the outcome must be accepted.

"I have been very proud to serve the FBU for many years as a national official and as general secretary. I would urge all members to unite to face the challenges ahead."



ANDREW BARRETT

**Matt Wrack: I will represent all members of the FBU**

## ACAS meets over rank to role pay protection

THE arbitration service ACAS met on May 3 over the issue of pay protection on the substantive move from rank to role in the fire and rescue service, following a formal request from the union for conciliation and, if necessary, arbitration.

Discussions are now under way on terms of reference and appointment of an arbitrator and a hearing is expected by late June.

With no national agreement being reached on the substantive move from rank to role, brigade committees have been urged not to reach any agreement at a local level on this issue.

Brigade committees are also being urged not to participate in processes set up to implement the role-based pay structure.

Implementation should only take place once guidance on pay issues relating to assessment of competence for each role in the integrated personal development system (IPDS) pay structure and the assessment of job size for some of the roles has been agreed by both sides but this has not happened.

■ The union and national employers are setting dates for meetings for both the application and determination of the professional pay formula, which is to have effect from July 1 this year.

Under the June 2003 pay and conditions agreement, the principles and details on which the new pay formula is based have already been agreed: the average rise in the pay of professional workers (APT).

■ Meetings on the union's side of the joint working party for the continuous professional development (CPD) scheme that is to replace long service increment and meetings on the employers side are currently being scheduled.

## IRMP training office opens

THE union has opened a new national training centre in Bridgend, Wales, which will also house the national integrated risk management planning department.

It hosted its first official meeting on 27 April.

The meeting considered the FBU's response to an ODPM

consultation on proposals to introduce a national electronic incident reporting system. The proposed system is intended to replace the current (and often paper-based) FDR1 data capture system.

The first training/workshop event for the FBU National Training Centre was programmed for the

19 and 20 May. Regional IRMP co-ordinators and members of the FBU's IRMP Board (which provides strategic advice to the EC on IRMP issues) met for a two-day IRMP planning and strategy workshop.

For more information on the FBU's national IRMP strategy visit [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk) and go to the workplace section.

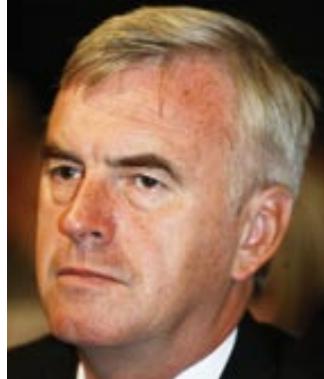
# First meeting of FBU parliamentary group

THE first meeting of the 32-strong FBU Parliamentary Group was held on 22 March, just before the General Election recess.

The chair of the group is Andrew Dismore, Labour MP for Hendon, the vice chair is Mick Clapham, Labour MP for Barnsley is West and Penistone, the secretary John McDonnell, Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington. The first meeting of the new Parliament will be on 21 June.

So far the group has been briefed by the Union on IRMPs and some members of the group have received specific regional briefings. Members of the group also sent a letter to John Prescott on the implementation of IRMPs.

In the build-up to being established formally, the group lobbied



**Group secretary John McDonnell MP**

against proposals to remove the fire safety measures for sub-surface rail stations introduced following the 1987 Kings Cross fire. This involved speaking in an adjournment debate and

presenting evidence to the regulatory reform committee.

It also tabled an early day motion on the proposed cuts to the London Fire Brigade, attracting 47 signatures before the recess.

The Group consists of:

John Austin, Mick Clapham, Harry Cohen, Michael Connarty, Jeremy Corbyn, Jim Cousins, Ann Cryer, Ian Davidson, Andrew Dismore, David Drew, Neil Gerrard, Ian Gibson, David Hamilton, Kate Hoey, Kelvin Hopkins, Lynne Jones, Peter Kilfoyle, Tony Lloyd, Rob Marris, Christine McCafferty, John McDonnell, Austin Mitchell, George Mudie, Mohammad Sarwar, Alan Simpson, Marsha Singh, Dennis Skinner, Gavin Strang, David Taylor, Rudi Vis, Joan Walley, Bob Wareing.



**FBU members from Gorton and Moss Side in Manchester helped to collect a container load of 100,000 children's books for a Community HEART appeal. The books are now in Tembisa, a deprived township on the outskirts of Johannesburg**



**Scottish FBU members present a cheque for £19,626.29 to the Burns Unit at St Johns Hospital near Edinburgh. Members in Lothian and Borders decided to donate the remains of the hardship money collected during the dispute to the unit**



**Phil Woolas campaigning in the last election**

## New fire service minister replaces Raynsford

PHIL Woolas, MP for Oldham East and Saddleworth, is the new minister for local government and will take primary responsibility for the fire and rescue service.

Woolas reports to David Miliband, minister for local government and communities, and ultimately deputy prime minister John Prescott, who continues to preside over the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Woolas is a former president of the National Union of Students and the former head of communications at the GMB trade union.

Involved in election campaigns in 1992 and 1997, he was also a BBC Newsnight producer and then a producer at Channel 4 News.

Jimmy Fitzpatrick MP, a former member of the Executive Committee of the FBU, is now a parliamentary secretary in the ODPM.

He will support Woolas and Yvette Cooper MP, minister for housing and planning (ODPM) in the House of Commons.

Baroness Andrews, a former education adviser to Neil Kinnock makes up the ministerial team. Unusually, the Department will have two representatives in Cabinet – Miliband and Prescott.

## Union welcomes authority's BNP move

THE union has welcomed the position that Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has taken in proposing to discipline and possibly dismiss, employees who are members of far-right political parties including the BNP.

In a joint statement Michael Nicholas, executive council member for black and ethnic minority members, and Samantha Samuels, national chair for B&EMM said: "We warmly welcome and fully support fully support the position that Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has taken in

proposing to discipline.

"As Gloucestershire rightly points out, these people have no place in a public service and as public authorities now have extensive responsibilities under the Race Relations Act 2000, it's time to take the appropriate action.

"We will continue, at all levels of the fire service, to lobby for all local authorities to take the same position that Gloucestershire has, and we call upon all fire service stakeholders to join us in our campaign to ensure that the modern service is free from

the stain of racism and racist behaviour."

Since Gloucestershire made its move against the BNP, Avon's fire authority and chief fire officer have issued a statement also welcomed by the union.

In December, the FBU Executive Council agreed to mount a major campaign to eradicate the BNP and other racist groups from the union and the UK fire and rescue service and the campaign has received a positive response from the practitioners forum of fire service stakeholders.



ANDREW WARD

FBU members joined other public sector workers to protest at government pension plans in February this year

# Union demands 'proper negotiations' on pensions

**N**EW FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack has appealed to ministers to engage in "proper negotiations" over the reform of the Firefighters Pension Scheme and Local Government Pensions Scheme, describing pensions as a "seminal issue for the third term of the Labour government."

Matt Wrack said plans to undermine the pensions of public sector workers, including firefighters, were "immoral" and added: "The government has retreated for now, but has made no real concession and deep down we know they will be back again. Pensions will be a seminal issue for the third term of the Labour government."

The new FBU General Secretary made the comments as the FBU met in Southport on May 10-13 for its annual conference where delegates backed an Executive Council emergency resolution calling on the union leadership to engage in "serious discussions and negotiations with the government to protect and improve FBU members' pensions."

Conference also recognised that the union should "continue to work with other unions through the TUC and to assist in co-ordinating

a united campaign and action against the proposals."

In addition, conference congratulated FBU members and officials for participating in the campaign, which included the lobbies of MPs in November 2004 and February 2005, and a TUC-co-ordinated day of action on 18 February 2005.

The union will be negotiating on the issue of pension reform with the new fire minister.

In response to pressure from public service unions, the outgoing Pensions Secretary Alan Johnson offered in late March to start a process of genuine negotiation and not imposition.

At a high-level summit of ministers and trade union leaders on 31 March, just weeks before the General Election, Alan Johnson accepted the government had handled the issue of pensions reform poorly and said there would be genuine negotiations across the public services.

However, he added that the government could not ignore the demographic changes taking place which would see a huge increase in the number of pensioners in 50 years time.

Cabinet minister Ian McCartney also said

that could not be ignored and that a long-term solution had to be reached. He said the talks were not window dressing but a reaction to the backlash from across the public sector.

The union welcomed the change of process. But said the government had been too slow to understand the depth and strength of feeling.

The government was ignoring the physical nature of the role of firefighters and the dangerous nature of the job, it said.

At that meeting the union told former Fire Minister Phil Hope that if the ODPM wanted a fresh start, the process should kick off with a meeting with the FBU. Alan Johnson and Ian McCartney both indicated such a move would be welcome.

Alan Johnson's letter of invitation to the summit on March 31, stated: "Concerns have been raised by the unions and many public sector workers that the government appeared to be proceeding with reform of this area by diktat. However, Cabinet has agreed all aspects of the government's proposals are open to discussion and negotiation within the framework of the law and tax treatment of pensions."

# Service waits for FireControl project announcement

**T**HE fire service was bracing itself for a Government announcement on the FireControl project as *Firefighter* went to press. The future of every emergency fire control rooms in England remained as precarious as the project itself.

Decisions over the future of controls in Scotland is likely to be heavily influenced by any decision taken in Whitehall. Wales has already said it is not interested in the regional control project.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is preparing to treat the workforce with contempt, saying staff will be given only an hour's notice of where the new regional controls will be sited. But that decision is still no foregone conclusion with worries about cost and whether the proposed regional controls will work at all.

Fire authorities have been increasingly hostile in their approach to the project with many of them sharing the same reservations as the FBU. The Chief Fire Officers Association is sitting on the fence saying it supports the project (but only if it works perfectly and makes all the promised savings).

General Secretary Matt Wrack has written to new ODPM minister Phil Woolas calling for an urgent rethink. He has also written to the chairs of fire authorities urging them to give the new minister their thoughts on the issue.

Cuts to fire services have already been made in order for each regional management board to find over £500,000 this year to pay for control project consultants. A lot of the behind the scenes project work is also being funded by fire authorities.

The union has urged members to contact their local MPs asking them to make urgent representations to government. You can also take a few minutes to e-mail your MP urging a rethink using the website.

The union's annual conference in Southport said the government should drop the plan saying it would lead to cuts in fire services, push up council tax and put lives in danger.

The conference passed an emergency resolution condemning the plans. The union said it would oppose the plans by all means possible including balloting for industrial action.

FBU President Ruth Winters said: "The new ministers need to listen to the voices of the fire service telling them this plan must be dropped. It is opposed by the workforce and by large numbers of councillors and fire authorities.

"The government's track record on large



**The FBU's response to the plans**

scale technology projects is very poor. Their record suggests this project will be very expensive and may not work at all.

"The project will lead to cuts in fire services and push up council tax to pay the £1 billion costs of these remote regional centres. It's expensive, risky, and won't save a single life.

"Our ability to respond instantly to incidents

could be badly damaged. It won't be benefits or tax credits being delayed, as happened after other government technology failures, it will be a frontline 999 service.

"The new ministers must look again at the professional arguments put to them. If they press ahead we will look at our options and that will include industrial action."

**Let your MP know you oppose these proposals. You can email them quickly and simply by going to the union's dedicated control campaign website:**  
**[www.controlcare.org.uk](http://www.controlcare.org.uk)**

# Attacks running at 40 a week

**I**N SOME parts of the country, fire crews are served a daily diet of bricks, bottles and missiles as they fight fires; in parts of the country ambushes have been set for firefighters.

The attacks include scaffolding poles being thrown through windscreens of fire engines; crews being attacked with concrete blocks, bricks and bottles; being shot at; spat at; equipment tampered with or stolen; direct physical assaults on fire crews; and equipment being urinated on.

And under-reporting of attacks means that the figure could be as much as three times higher. Official statistics show that attacks are now running at about 2,000 a year, but the FBU and the brigades contacted during the research acknowledge that there is a serious problem of under-reporting.

Although seen largely as an inner city problem, the research uncovered reports of attacks in the South Wales valleys, Royal Berkshire, small towns in Scotland and sedate Tonbridge Wells.

National Officer Paul Woolstenholmes said: "The number and ferocity of the attacks appears to be getting worse. A young boy died in Scotland during one attack and it is only a question of time before a firefighter is killed.

"These attacks are inexcusable and must not be tolerated. It can never be part of anyone's job to get a brick or bottle in the head or to be spat at.

"The causes appear complex and we need more than knee-jerk reaction headlines calling for 'crackdowns'. Many attacks are in deprived areas with poor youth facilities and poor housing, where bored young people turn to

There are 40 attacks on UK fire crews every week and the problem is getting worse, according to new research carried out for the Fire Brigades Union

drugs and alcohol.

"But they happen in many other types of areas which are neither poor nor deprived. There is no quick-fix solution but we need to start with a properly resourced, national strategy rather than it being left to cash-strapped local fire services," he said.

There is evidence of fires being deliberately started to lure fire crews into pre-planned ambushes. Even if actual physical violence doesn't take place, fire crews still face threats, intimidation and abuse.

Official figures from Northern Ireland reveal that there were 1,200 attacks on crews in the last three years, with serious concerns that the problem is being underplayed. In Scotland, where statistics have only been collated more recently, 388 hostile incidents were recorded in 2004.

In England and Wales, in the nine-month period to the end of January 2005 (based on data from only 18 of 50 brigades) 393 attacks were reported. When statistics are extrapolated to cover all brigades over 12 months, they suggest more than 1,200 attacks.

The level of under-reporting is demonstrated by official statistics from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, showing that there were only nine attacks in the whole of the Greater Manchester area in the nine months to the end of January 2005. Figures collected by the brigade itself indicate attacks running at around 200 a year.

## KEY POINTS FROM THE ANALYSIS

- Statistics – more needs to be done to ensure there is proper collection of standardised statistics on attacks. In some brigades, fire crews are being encouraged to report every single incident, but they will be encouraged even more if they understand how the figures can be used.
- Co-ordination and evaluation – different initiatives are being taken around the country, including public awareness campaigns and community-based projects with offenders and potential offenders. These need to be monitored and properly evaluated at national level so that brigades can learn more quickly what works and what doesn't. What may help in one area may hinder in another.
- Training – operational guidance on dynamic risk assessment can be part of the solution but

**'These attacks are inexcusable and must not be tolerated. It can never be part of anyone's job to get a brick or bottle in the head or to be spat at'**

# **TODAY**



crews need to be properly trained in its application. If incidents cannot be avoided then an appropriate level of training for fire crews should help them deal with the situations.

- Resources – training and initiatives with schools and the community need to be maintained over the long term and need dedicated resources.

## **ATTACKS ON FIREFIGHTERS – LRD REPORT**

Below is summary of a report prepared by the Labour Research Department which the union will shortly be publishing in full and distributing widely in the union, through the UK fire and rescue service, to Government, MPs and other relevant organisations.

At the beginning of March a two-year old boy died in the Easterhouse area of Glasgow after he was shot in the head with an air rifle. The primary targets may have been the fire-

fighters attempting to put out a kitchen fire. A firefighter was also hit with an airgun pellet around the same time.

In the middle of March this year fire crews in Belfast faced eight separate hostile incidents in a single night.

At the end of March two firefighters and a sub-officer in Greater Manchester were injured when their crew faced a barrage of missiles while attending a small rubbish fire in Winton, Eccles.

These are just the high-profile incidents, the ones that are reported in the press. In some areas of the UK there are periods when firefighters face this kind of violence almost every night.

While there is a lack of hard statistics in most brigades there is a very clear perception from firefighters that there has been a significant increase in recent years in the number and scale of attacks.

There is evidence of fires being deliberately

started to lure firefighters into pre-planned ambushes. The attacks include: scaffolding poles being thrown through windscreens; fire crews being attacked with concrete blocks, bricks and bottles; being shot at; being spat at; equipment tampered or stolen; direct physical assaults on firefighters; equipment being urinated on.

But it is also disturbing that even if actual violence doesn't take place, firefighters can face an almost daily diet of threats, intimidation and abuse.

## **THE REPORT**

This report aims to provide an overview of this issue. It looks at the scale of the problem and the extent to which official statistics reflect what is actually happening.

Union and brigade officials as well as firefighters in Manchester, Belfast and Glasgow were interviewed for this report and informa-

# ATTACKS ON FIREFIGHTERS

tion was collected on the situation in other areas of the country.

The report outlines some of the initiatives being taken in response to what brigades in several areas regard as a serious and growing problem.

It then concludes with some key points about what could be done by the union, the Fire Service and the government to tackle this in a co-ordinated way as a priority issue.

## THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Official figures from Northern Ireland indicate that there were 1,500 attacks on fire and ambulance crews in the last three years. In Scotland and the UK figures have only been put together more recently with 388 hostile incidents recorded in 2004 across Scotland and 393 in England and Wales in the nine-month period to the end of January 2005 (based on data from only 18 of 50 brigades).

However, both the union and the brigades approached for this report acknowledge that there is a serious problem of under-reporting.

It was recognised that firefighters often fail to report incidents. Some of the main reasons given for this were:

- Incidents happen so regularly that they start to be seen as part of the job;
- There is, to some extent, a "macho" culture which says that firefighters can put up with a bit of abuse;
- There is a reluctance to do the paperwork; and
- There is a feeling that making a report will not make any difference.

Firefighters in Strathclyde summed it up by saying: "As a general rule, if there is no physical injury and no substantial damage to equipment then there would be no report."

So this means that not only are many incidents missed but the statistics fail to tell the story of the daily toll taken by attacks and the threat of attacks and verbal abuse.

## THE RESPONSE

Brigades around the country are taking initiatives which they consider may help address the issue both in terms of protection for firefighters and tackling the underlying causes of the attacks.

- Brigades argue that proper implementation of operational guidance on dynamic risk assessment allows crews to withdraw from or decide not to intervene where the threat to firefighter safety outweighs the threat posed by the fire. Firefighters and union officials are concerned that often decisions on the ground are difficult to take and that training and management support in this area are crucial.
- New legislation and stiffer penalties for offenders are on the agenda. In Scotland the proposed bill on emergency service workers will

**ON 9 May this year the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act came into force in Scotland making it a criminal offence to assault, obstruct or hinder a person who is**

- **Acting in the capacity of a police office, fire officer or ambulance worker;**
- **Acting in the capacity of a prison officer; a member of the coastguard; a doctor; a member of the a water rescue vessel; a nurse; a midwife; a social worker enforcing a child protection order or emergency protection authorisation; or a mental health officer who is responding to emergency circumstances;**
- **Assisting someone acting in the capacity of any of the emergency workers listed in the Act, while they are responding to emergency circumstances; or**

**Offences under the Act will attract a maximum penalty of 9 months in custody, a £5000 fine or both.**

**Whilst the Act itself only protects emergency workers, the Scottish Executive in partnership with the STUC is working to deal with the rising tide of verbal and physical assaults against workers facing the public through the implementation of a package of measures encouraging employers to take the problem seriously. Fife Brigade Secretary, Linda Shanahan is currently seconded to the Scottish Executive to work on this.**

**Commenting on the legislation Linda said: "Whilst there will always be criticisms of the application of legislation it is clear that with the advent of this Act a clear message has been sent out to those who seek to abuse firefighters and other emergency workers that their behaviour will no longer be tolerated. The publicity this has generated now means that no-one in Scotland can be under any illusion they will not be dealt with severely by the courts if they decide to abuse FBU members or other emergency staff at work."**

mean that attacks on firefighters, among other groups of workers, will be a specific offence resulting in more serious penalties. The impact of this remains to be seen. While welcomed by some there is a feeling in some quarters that this should not be the main response to the problem.

- Brigades in several areas are working with young people, communities, local authorities and other agencies to try to address some

of the underlying causes. In these cases it is essentially about creating a new image for the service as a vital part of the local community.

- Special projects with young offenders such as LIFE in London and Belfast and Firefly in Oldham – and there are others around the country – are specific attempts to reach out to the youths who are the usual offenders and give them a better understanding of what the service is all about.

- Community safety visits to schools are common in most areas but in some brigades now, such as Strathclyde and Northern Ireland, attacks on firefighters are a more regular part of the discussion particularly in secondary schools

- Public awareness campaigns are being tried in Scotland and Northern Ireland, trying to make people aware of the risks being created for communities if firefighters and ambulance crews can't attend incidents because of violence or the threat of violence. However, there is some concern that such initiatives may risk generating copycat attacks and that they fail to reach the very people responsible for the attacks.

The key points that emerge from this overview of the problem are:

- Statistics – more needs to be done to ensure there is proper collection of standardized statistics on attacks. In some brigades fire crews are being encouraged to report every incident but they will be encouraged even more if they understand what is being done with the figures.

- Co-ordination and evaluation – different initiatives are being taken around the country – public awareness, projects with offenders. These need to be monitored and properly evaluated at national level so that brigades can learn more quickly what works and what doesn't.

- Training – operational guidance on dynamic risk assessment can be part of the solution but crews need to be properly trained in its application and if incidents cannot be avoided then an appropriate level of training for firefighters should help them deal with the situation.

- Resources – training and initiatives with schools and the community need to be maintained over the long term and need dedicated resources.

It is clear that work is being done to try to tackle this very serious problem. But these are early days when we are only beginning to get a clear picture of the scale of attacks.

A coherent strategy at national level would help brigades at local level where implementation could take account of local circumstances.

Above all firefighters need to be informed and consulted over the initiatives being taken. At the moment there is a feeling that brigades may be trying good things on an ad hoc basis but often there is no clear strategy.

# Firefighter talked to Scottish firefighter Alan Goodwillie, one of the victims of the violence

**F**IREFIGHTERS are hardwired to save lives. But as this magazine highlighted earlier this year, crews are increasingly finding themselves under attack when they are just trying to get on with the job of protecting people from fire.

The evidence is shocking. Verbal abuse and taunts have become commonplace on some estates and run-down communities and such incidents are even happening in relatively affluent parts of the four nations.

The Firefighter's feature on the threat crews can face has now been backed up with independent findings from the Labour Research Department. This found that there are, on average, 40 attacks on UK fire crews every week. When crews get pelted with stones or ambushed on the way to a malicious emergency calls, the incidents barely get a mention beyond local papers.

But the consequences of such attacks can be fatal – as the tragic death of two-year-old Glasgow toddler Andrew Morton proved so horrendously in early March.

An appliance from Easterhouse fire station was called out to deal with a kitchen blaze. A crowd soon gathered round, and an air gun pellet struck the young boy's head. He was rushed to the intensive care unit at the city's Southern General Hospital where he later died of injuries caused by the pellet.

The tragedy has sent shock waves through Easterhouse fire station and the huge peripheral estate it serves. It also prompted Joe Lowe,



**Alan Goodwillie: retired on medical grounds**

**'I didn't think being attacked would affect me the way it did. I was just at the wrong place at the wrong time'**

convenor of Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Board, to issue a statement putting on record that his thoughts and those of the board were with Andrew's family. But he also put the toddler's unnecessary death in the context with which crews are all too familiar. "The tragic death of little Andrew Morton brings home the fact that attacks on firefighters are far too common." A pellet had earlier struck a firefighter attending the report of kitchen blaze in the same street. He was uninjured.

The needless, random loss of a young boy's life has left a community traumatised and lead to a murder investigation. A 27-year old man has been charged and a court case is now pending.

The fall-out from attacks is not normally so tragic and high profile – but for individual fire crew members such incidents can leave a lasting and unwelcome legacy. They can also cut short careers.

Take Scottish firefighter Alan Goodwillie,

victim of a random air-gun shooting whilst out on a call from his station at East Kilbride to unfamiliar terrain in Hamilton back in August 2002. He was helping the appliance driver negotiate a turn at a road junction when he felt a thud to the side of his head. Two more pellets were fired into the appliance. He was taken straight to hospital, thankful that the injury didn't seem too serious and thought he could put it behind him. But the attack left him plagued by blinding headaches, flashbacks and the troubling realisation that he could easily have lost an eye if his head had been positioned slightly differently when the pellet struck. Alan is still learning to cope with the experience.

"I went back to work after about seven weeks and felt I could cope at first. But it just got worse and worse. I got counselling, but after a while I realised it had affected me very seriously." Alan's attempt to put the attack behind him was undermined further by a second brush with violence when he'd been back at work for just eight weeks. When on a call-out on firework night, a brick was lobbed through the window of the appliance he was riding in. He was back work at on and off before being retired on medical grounds in July 2003, with a lump sum and pension.

Alan's testimony is both chastening and revealing. "I didn't think being attacked would affect me the way it did. I was just at the wrong place at the wrong time. There were the flashbacks and the headaches. I've been seeing a counsellor every couple of months but will probably stop soon because I'm out of it all now. I was lucky that the pellet didn't hit my right eye. These are things that I don't think about too much now. I was lucky, but then I was unlucky. But it could have been a lot worse."

He served over 27 years as a firefighter and never expected to leave early in his mid-forties. "I'm glad it's all over now, but it's been quite a burden this last couple of years. I'm just flummoxed why people do this. I'd been attacked at work a few times before – eggs and stones and the like. But I just didn't expect to get shot at. The police came to see me when



**Alan Goodwillie: 'I was unlucky. But it could have been a lot worse'**

I was in hospital, but I never heard whether they'd caught the guy or not. The fact that he fired off another couple of shots after he'd hit me really got to me."

Now he is out of the service he is happy to speak out about the impact it has had on his life to highlight the impact violent attacks and ambushes can have on fire crew members. "You're doing a job to protect the public. You shouldn't have to have one eye on what you're doing and another behind your back in case you get attacked. I'm quite happy now to be away from it all now and can get my life back on track."

In South Wales there have been over 80 attacks on appliances and crews – from stoning to ambushes – since the beginning of last year. Stonings figure highly, crews have been verbally abused and spat at, gas cylinders and bottles thrown and a car was even driven at crews.

According to FBU official Bob Allen, who worked as a firefighter for over 20 years,

stonings and missile throwing have become far too commonplace for comfort. For fire crews, there's nothing new about unprovoked attacks, but the situation has, he believes worsened over recent years. "It has always happened, but it definitely seems to be getting worse in some areas it's just turning into a normal occurrence," adding that the problem could well be under-reported. So why does he think attacks happened?

"It is very difficult to understand – maybe it's an anti-authority thing. Or maybe it's because by putting out the car they've torched or the fire they've lit it's seen as putting the fun out. The brigade is not complacent. But when fire crews find themselves under fire from bottles and stones, they are unlikely to have the psychology of the child or the work arson forums do to educate young people on the dangers at the forefront of their minds."

Though the attacks continue, a court ruling in South Wales has sent a warning shot across the bows to employers that they could be liable for damages in the county court in certain circumstances if crews come under attack from outsiders.

The FBU-backed case involved a member who was awarded damages from the South Wales Fire Service for injuries sustained when a stone hit his shoulder in an unprovoked attack in a Cardiff Park in early autumn 2000. He wrenched his shoulder to avoid further missiles.

Earlier that evening, the crew had put out a rubbish fire in a park started by a gang of youths who became abusive and threatening. At this point, the leading firefighter informed control that the police would be needed if the youths carried out their threat to restart the fire.

**'I'm just flummoxed why people do this. I'd been attacked at work a few times before – eggs and stones and the like. But I just didn't expect to get shot at'**

This was in line with a memo issued by the South Wales Fire Service just months earlier. It gave specific instructions for Commanders not to risk any member of crew being injured if there was no possibility of it spreading or endangering life. It also stated that when arriving at a scene where a hostile crowd was present, the crew be withdrawn and police assistance called.

But a short time later, the crew received a further call to the park. A large gang of youths were again gathered – and the fire had been relit. The leading firefighter gave the crew instructions to put out the fire, though the police were not in attendance. It was then that the firefighter was hit in the back and wrenched his shoulder to avoid further missiles.

The case went to court and the judge found the service negligent. He stated there was clear evidence that the service had become increasingly concerned that youths were attacking crew members and many “near” misses had occurred before the firefighter was injured. He added it was foreseeable that the youths, who had been threatening and abusive when the crew put out the first fire, could attack crew members.

The case clearly establishes that in certain circumstances employers can be liable for assault from outsiders. In this case, it appears that the South Wales Fire Service failed to comply with its own memo on safeguarding crews when a fire poses no risk to life or there is no risk of it spreading.

A recent incident in South Shields on Tyneside will strike a chord with far too many firefighters.

At around 6.30 one evening in early April, a four-man crew from South Shields were called out to a small rubbish fire near Bolden Colliery. Gangs of youths gathered round to watch the drama. But as the crew began to douse the blaze, things turned ugly. First came the verbal abuse – followed by stones thrown from behind a wall. Two crew members were hit in the back as they got on with their job. Fortunately they were not injured – this time.

The attack came just days after paramedics, speeding to an emergency nearby, had a lucky escape from injury when a stone was hurled through an ambulance windscreens.

Station officer Bill West, who has notched up 28 years in the service, said he was baffled by such behaviour. Such apparently motiveless attacks have always been around, but they seemed to be getting worse in recent years, he adds.

“Our equipment has changed to reflect the problem too. People think we wear our visors to protect us from debris and suchlike, but we have goggles for that. The visors are there for the sole reason that we can’t risk our firefighters being hit in the face by missiles thrown by kids. I honestly have no idea why they do this. We go to schools and have chats with kids

## **‘Attacks are getting worse and there now seems to be a complete lack of respect. We’ve tried everything’**

about fire safety and I always ask the same question. Why do you do it? But we never get a proper answer and I’m just as baffled as I always have been. People should realise the importance of the job we do. We shouldn’t have to deal with attacks like this.”

The experience of fire crews in Northern Ireland is complex – and changing. At the height of the “troubles” there was generally respect for frontline firefighters, according to Jim Barbour. But things began to change in the mid-nineties when low level street crime, random thuggery and lawlessness began adding to the attacks.

“Attacks are getting worse and there now seems to be a complete lack of respect. We’ve tried everything. I’m sure youth schemes

## **‘People think we wear our visors to protect us from debris and suchlike, but we have goggles for that. The visors are there for the sole reason that we can’t risk our firefighters being hit in the face by missiles thrown by kids’**

have had a positive impact – but they haven’t stopped the attacks. In the past there was more a controlled factor – but that seems to have broken down. We maintained our neutrality throughout the troubles and will not get involved with monitoring cameras in engines with a view to making arrests. The FBU believes that would just make crews more vulnerable.”

He is highly sceptical about the positive impact the high profile media awareness campaign launched by ministers in Northern Ireland because there was no attempt to

involve communities on the ground.

In FBU London region, the emphasis is very much on working with communities and youth groups, former London official Matt Wrack told us before his recent election as General Secretary. He cites the Life project – Local Intervention Fire Education Project – which stated out in Shadwell, Tower Hamlets.

Disaffected teenagers, referred by the local youth offending team, are invited through the station doors to meet the crews – a strategy which seems to be paying off. After the scheme was introduced, deliberate attacks on fire crews in the borough dropped by over 75 per cent. It has since been rolled out to other boroughs where attacks were occurring regularly.

“There were two possible responses to increasing attacks on Shadwell crews,” says Wrack. “We could have put in higher walls, installed security cameras and turned the station into a little fortress. The other view was to try and find out why it’s happening and break down those barriers. That’s our view as a region and it’s an approach we are keen to emphasise. We have had a number of attacks on crews, and with our support and that of members the brigade’s response has been to try and build bridges.”

There are many other initiatives throughout the UK which chime with the New Agenda’s greater emphasis on community fire safety through attempting to engage with those who could be on the route to bottle hurling.

Inverclyde in Scotland has seen a sharp fall in attacks on fire crews since Infotxt, an information service for young people, was introduced a year ago: attacks on crews in the Greenock and Port Glasgow areas have dropped from 15 to six.

“There is strong evidence that Infotxt has contributed to this reduction in attacks and that young people will pursue positive activities if they receive information about them,” said Senior Officer David Miller, Commander of Strathclyde Fire and Rescue West Command.

With the grim aftermath of the shotgun pellet which cut short young Andrew Morton’s life on Easterhouse still fresh in people’s memories, fire crews who have already been a target for missiles and ambushes will no doubt be hoping he is right.

The union is raising the issue with the Government.

# We have to address the twin issues of user-friendly long-term care for the elderly and protecting them from fire, argues Glyn Evans, the FBU's Fire Safety Adviser

**T**HE problem with growing old is that it seems to creep up on you so that you only realise it's happening when things which you never gave much thought to now take more time and effort. A good walk induces aches and pains in places that you never knew you had. Unfortunately, the ageing process is one that catches up with us all irrespective of individual circumstances. You may be able to offset and reduce the rigours of the ageing process, but it is a fact that you cannot halt it.

I'm from the generation known as the "baby boomers". We were born in the years immediately following the end of the Second World War. Due to advances in medical science and care allied to improved living conditions and greater social and personal awareness my generation can generally look forward to a longer lifespan than previous generations. It is also an issue which is concentrating minds in governments, where terms like the "grey vote" and "pensioner power" are often to be heard in the corridors of power as the collective voice of the increasing numbers joining those groups becomes increasingly robust.

One of the potential issues that this longevity raises for policymakers is the long term question of caring for a growing elderly population. It is also a question that has concerned me for some time and I raised my concerns in public forums over what it may mean for the fire and rescue services. My concern is how the governments will care for the increasing numbers of elderly people so that they can live out their lives in dignity and safety and the effect that the policies of government in this matter will have upon the fire and rescue services.

We can get an insight into the thinking of the government from a recent interview in *Saga* magazine with Dr Stephen Ladyman MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Health until the post-election reshuffle. Dr. Ladyman spoke of his vision of care for the elderly as being a two tiered system; the first tier being one of a series of options:

- first, adaptations to the person's home to allow them to stay there for as long as they are able with care being provided from an external source as necessary, or
- second, to move or even buy into a sheltered housing scheme with care and communal facilities available, or
- third, an "Extra Care" scheme consisting

# Care for the elderly – a fire and rescue service problem?

of super sheltered flats or bungalows with central communal facilities including nursing and medical care on site.

The second tier of care, which would be for the most care dependent persons and at their choice, is to move into a residential care home.

The options that Dr Ladyman envisaged offer the choice for people to stay in their own homes or to move to sheltered homes or extra care homes where they have their own front door and their privacy but have care and communal facilities to hand.

I have noticed that a number of local authorities are now moving to the monitored sheltered housing approach and also introducing 24/7 staffed central call centres to monitor the health and safety of the residents and provide assistance to them. Some have converted and improved redundant multi-storey blocks of flats to this purpose which have also proved very popular.

The concept of "Extra Care" schemes is still fairly new to the UK. But it is already developing in the USA where they are referred to as "care villages". The *Saga* article refers to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Hartrigg Oaks development near York which has 52 bungalows set around a community block and includes a library, restaurant, hairdresser and IT room. Each dwelling has access to home helps and nursing care, but there is also a 42-bed care home on site if residents can no longer cope alone.

If these are the potential options for the care of the elderly that government is considering and the fire and rescue services may be

presented with (although some are already happening), then perhaps we need to start considering now how we might deal with them so that the threat of fire is not something that the elderly need to worry about in the future. Certainly, it is something that the FBU is very conscious of and was one of the factors that influenced our ongoing NO<sub>2</sub> Fire Deaths campaign.

In the case of the elderly who choose to remain in their own home and have it improved so that they can remain there with assistance from external service providers we need to consider the fire protection of these properties very carefully. There also has to be a remote monitoring facility by which assistance can be summoned, automatically if necessary. The home improvement process has to include funding for safety issues to enable the elderly to improve the safety and security of their home as well as its accessibility and usability. If this doesn't happen there is the risk of people living in their own homes who may not be able to afford to provide the necessary degree of safety that they will require. They should be at no more risk than people who have chosen to move into sheltered accommodation and their homes should have the same safety facilities present.

In the case of purpose-built sheltered or extra care accommodation units, the implications of designing for an ageing occupancy move us into the realms of advanced and integrated electronic fire alarm, safety and security systems which are remotely monitored and linked to personal alarms carried by residents



BRIAN GALLAGHER

that would actuate the safety system if they fall, or collapse, or wish to summon assistance for whatever reason. Looking at a defence against a fire in such premises in addition to the provision of effective fire separation measures surely we must now also be contemplating the mandatory provision of residential sprinkler systems in such premises. The Scots have already made this connection. It will become a requirement of their Building Regulations in April of this year for all new-build sheltered accommodation. How long will it be before England and Wales do so?

We should not be talking about trade-offs in fire safety measures for premises which are being designed and built purely for occupation by the elderly. We should be arguing for a combined and full on safety approach because the potential frailty of the residents dictates that it must be so even if they are not frail when they enter such accommodation.

As a result of the length of time that I spent as a fire prevention officer I was able to observe at first hand the effects of the passage of time upon residents of all types of sheltered accommodation. After 10-15 years, of those residents

who were still alive some were having difficulties coping with the everyday tasks that they had managed perfectly adequately when they first moved in. Some were still just about capable of caring for themselves with assistance from on site staff or other residents. A very strong sense of community had also developed so that residents who perhaps should have moved to a residential care home became very distressed and upset if this was suggested – a situation which is completely understandable.

What was clearly needed was a careful consideration of the long term needs of the elderly in planning the buildings they would live in, the level and provision of services that they would need to maintain their quality of life and the life safety protection that would be built in for their protection. This can be summed up, as I said above, by the security provided for residents by access to on site or externally monitored 24/7 care services backed up by electronic safety and security systems properly integrated with a combination of structural fire safety measures and automatic fire suppression systems.

Finally, and by no means least, when the need arose which it did on a number of occasions, there is the absolute need for the surety of an effective fire and rescue service safety net response to ensure that residents do not become yet another fire statistic.

Whatever we do we have to address the twin issues of user-friendly long-term care for the elderly and protecting them from fire because they will not go away and every day that passes brings you and I closer to experiencing them first hand. I hope that if nothing else this article starts you thinking about these matters.

New arrangements for the care of the elderly was one of the factors that influenced our ongoing NO2 Fire Deaths campaign.

We must be contemplating following Scotland's lead with mandatory provision of residential sprinkler systems in purpose-built sheltered or extra care accommodation units in England and Wales.

There is the absolute need for the surety of an effective fire and rescue service safety net response to ensure that residents do not become yet another fire statistic.

Civil servants in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are trying to bury the most critical fire service safety research in 50 years

# Lives at risk

**T**HE most important safety research carried out in the fire service for 50 years is being buried by civil servants at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The lack of action at national level is putting the lives of firefighters and the public at risk with key parts of the research being ignored.

The FBU has accused the ODPM of "breath-taking complacency" and called for an urgent programme of national action to be led by the ODPM and fire service stakeholders including additional resources.

Commissioned after 9/11, the Buildings Disaster Advisory Group (BDAG) research is the first to measure the effect on the human body of fighting fires in a range of day-to-day scenarios and in extreme conditions such as high rise blocks. It found that a mix of heavy workload and heat from fires leads to dangerously high levels of heat exhaustion in firefighters even in normal firefighting conditions.

In the research trials the core body temperatures of firefighters reached such high levels that most of the tests had to be stopped. It shows that firefighters can only fight fires for between 13-16 minutes before unsafe body temperatures are reached.

Instead of urgent action at national level ODPM civil Servants sent out a non-descript circular to fire authorities outlining the research "for information". They added that it did not

require a response and that it was not relevant to the Government's fire service policy.

But a DVD of the research trials obtained by the union contains footage of exhausted firefighters, with many of the tests being cut short on health and safety grounds. Many took several hours to recover.

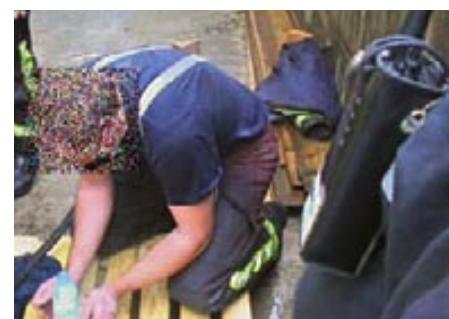
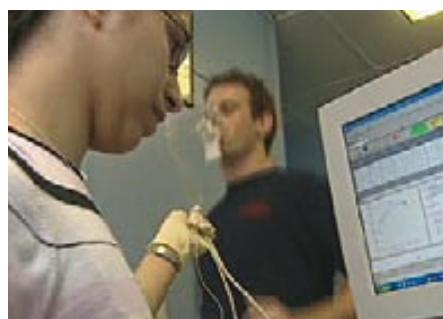
The union said: "The most important safety research in 50 years is being swept under the carpet because it shows we need more firefighters. They asked the questions and now they don't like the answers.

"The inaction of the ODPM is breath-takingly complacent. It is putting the lives of firefighters and the public at risk.

"The research clearly shows that firefighting is dangerously exhausting even for very fit individuals. We also need proper rest periods to recover.

"This clearly suggests that more firefighters are needed in the first response to fires with more needed throughout the incident. This contradicts current Government thinking which is why key parts of the research are being swept under the carpet.

"We need a national action plan put together by all fire service stakeholders which must include more resources. Instead we only have suggestions including changes to building design which will take 50 years to have an impact."



# The DVD

Below are some key extracts from the DVD

## **HIGH RISE SCENARIO OF CLIMBING STAIRS AND FIGHTING FIRE:**

Watch Manager Keith Feltham: "If you went in now you'd last a couple of minutes, that would be it then, you'd become a danger to your crew."

Narrator: Climbing many floors with EDBA [Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus] and hose resulted in fatigue, heat strain and physical exhaustion to the extent that committing firefighters into a fire compartment would be unsafe, whilst climbing unloaded was less arduous and the subsequent commitment to the fire compartment would appear to be tolerable to the majority of firefighters.

Simon Hunt – Area Manager and Project Manager BDAG: "What has become clear is that existing assumptions that firefighters would be able to climb a given

number of floors and then commence a fire fighting operation would give the evidence we have here appear to be limited, in fact it might require a separate team to commence fire fighting operations where others have actually provided equipment and apparatus for them."

**Narrator:** As the trials progressed it became clear that thermal load [heat] was the prohibiting factor for crews in the accomplishment of any task and this would be at its most severe in a fire compartment.

## **THE NEXT PHASE – LOW RISE**

**Narrator:** On a number of occasions the trials were terminated early as firefighters were taken out due to heat stress. The data from the live fires confirm that physiological stress factors should play an important role in planning the appropriate response [FBU comment: this means the number of fire engines and firefighters sent – and the length of time it is anticipated they will take to get there] to a major fire incident.

Simon Hunt, Project Director again: "Certainly we've been surprised by

what we've found. In the case of the firefighting with live fires, the distances we've set and the fire sizes are nothing that might be regarded as extreme and yet on pretty much a larger number of fires, firefighters are going over the core temperatures and it is only because we've got the safety systems in place that we are able to ensure the firefighters' safety. In an operational incident those control measures may not actually be in place."

**Narrator:** The results of this work have shown that the physiological demands of firefighting and rescue operations are significant. These factors must be taken into account when planning operational response [FBU comment: this means the number of fire engines and firefighters sent to fires – and the length of time it is anticipated they will take to get there] producing guidance for fire and rescue procedures and developing building designs. New and revised standards for respiratory and protective equipment will also need to be re-evaluated in the light of this research.

# The written research

**Heat exhaustion: it is usually recognized that a maximum safe core body temperature is 38 degrees. In these tests the core temperature for termination was in fact 39.5 degrees, already above the maximum temperature considered to be safe.**

All firefighting and other rescue activities are dependent to a greater or lesser extent upon the physiological capabilities of firefighters. Thus the physiological limitations of firefighters must be considered when planning for conventional and terrorist incidents within the built and natural environment.

Currently, there is limited information available to fire and rescue service incident commanders on whether activities assigned to firefighters may exceed their ability to undertake the task safely within their physiological limitations, taking account of appropriate personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE and RPE). This

information is required for all operational incidents, from those attended on a routine basis, through to extreme events. While acknowledging that the expectations and performance demands placed upon firefighters will differ with the activity, there is presently little human factors guidance to support both planned and dynamic risk assessment of work activities.

## **AMBIENT CONDITIONS: NO FIRE**

4 (12%) were successful in completing the scenario, rescuing the casualty; 10 (31%) were terminated because the threshold core temperature was reached; 6 (19%) were stopped for safety reasons (usually associated with apparent uncertainty or confusion on the part of the firefighter, possibly fatigue or heat induced); and

12 (38%) were terminated prematurely due to a shortage of air (all in the SDBA conditions).

There were no successful outcomes on the two days when the routes were novel to all participants (day 1 and day 4), suggesting that participants achieved success on the scenario only once they

had 'learned' the route.

(From page 18, Chapter 3.1)

## **LIVE FIRE: BASEMENT/GROUND /FIRST/TOP FLOOR**

Of the 40 serials on all floors, nine (22.5%) were classified as completely successful ... Fifteen (37.5%) were stopped as their core temperature exceeded the termination criterion of 39.5°C, and a further 16 (40%) were stopped for safety reasons either by the safety officers or by the firefighters themselves.

In 24 of the 40 serials, the casualty was successfully rescued, but the serial was subsequently stopped prematurely as one of the termination criteria was reached during the remaining firefighting and search and rescue operations. These were classified as a 'partial success', as although the desired outcome of casualty rescue was achieved, the firefighters failed to complete the scenario safely using SOPs.

(from p 27 Para 4.1)

(Extracts from *Physiological Assessment of Firefighting, Search and Rescue in the Built Environment*. Published by ODPM)

With the general election now over, the union will be asking the new ministers a crucial question on fire safety enforcement

# Where have all the fire certificates gone?

**F**IRE certificates are a means of protecting members of the public and staff from fire in a range of premises, including hotels and boarding houses, offices, shops, factories and railway premises. They were first introduced on 1 June 1972 as a requirement for specified hotels and boarding houses through the use of the designation order procedure contained in the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and as a direct result of a series of fatal fires involving such premises. On 1 January 1977 specific workplaces were also designated for the purposes of the Act as requiring a fire certificate.

The Fire Precautions Act 1971 was itself an attempt by government to produce one single and all encompassing piece of fire safety legislation that would stand alone. That it never achieved this goal had far more to do with the politics of government and inter departmental rivalry than any defect in the 1971 Act itself. Nevertheless, we can count the fire certification process and the 1971 Act as legislative successes as since the 1970s deaths and injuries due to fires involving premises holding fire certificates have remained consistently extremely low. There is little doubt that this success is due to in no small part to the enforcement of the 1971 Act by the fire and rescue authorities.

However, the 1971 Act is to be removed and replaced in spring 2006 by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has not put in place any transitional arrangements regarding the enforcement of the 1971 Act and therefore, in our opinion, the Act and its statutory duties which are placed both upon owner/occupiers and the fire and rescue authorities remain in force and remain the will of Parliament.

The FBU has found that there has been a fall off in the number of fire certificates being issued by fire and rescue authorities and also a general reduction of trained and experienced uniformed staff in fire safety departments

dealing with the enforcement of fire safety legislation. Concerns about these factors had been expressed to us by FBU members serving in fire safety departments from fire and rescue services across the country. We decided too find out what was happening and why.

A series of Parliamentary Questions were asked of the then Minister with responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Directorate at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon Nick Raynsford MP, which produced some interesting information and statistics. In a reply dated the 27 January 2005 (see Appendix A) to a Parliamentary Question (PQ) the Minister referred to the fact that supplementary advice on transitional arrangements for the handling of applications for fire certificates had been issued, by the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

In answer to second PQ and also on the 27 January 2005 the Minister provided a brigade by brigade break down of the number of fire certificates issued by the fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales (see Appendix A) over the five year period 1999 to 2003/2004. The figures provided included all fire certificates issued by the fire and rescue authorities, not just new ones, so the figures included amended fire certificates issued under section 8 of the 1971 Act. Nevertheless the figures showed a reduction of 47% from 3680 fire certificates issued in 1999 to 1947 issued in 2003/4. It should be noted that a small number of Brigades did maintain a steady flow of fire certificates with no apparent drop off in enforcement activity over the five year period, but they were very much in a minority.

As the Minister had not fully answered part of the second PQ a supplementary PQ was laid down and answered on the 2 March 2005 (see Appendix B). This provided further interesting information and statistics. In Table 2 of the reply the actual figure for new fire certificates issued by the fire and rescue authorities in 2002/3 and the time taken to do so is given. As a result the figures in Table 2 were

less than those given in the reply made on the 27th January 2005 for that year.

Another interesting fact was that whilst there had been a reduction of around 32% in the overall number of fire certificates applied for (from 4932 to 3361) over the five-year period the comparative number of outstanding applications still awaiting certification had only fallen by 25% indicating that, although applications had fallen, enforcement activity had also apparently slipped by around 7% across the board.

In his reply of 27 January 2003 the Minister also referred to the CFOA guidance on transitional arrangements for handling applications for fire certificates. He said:

"Supplementary advice on handling of applications for fire certificates has been issued, by the Chief Fire Officers' Association."

The FBU obtained a copy of the CFOA advice which was approved by its National Fire Safety Committee in September 2003. The guidance basically suggests that fire and rescue authorities need not issue fire certificates if the owner/occupier does not insist upon receiving one. They do, however, recommend that other fire safety enforcement measures are used where necessary and that upon receipt of an application for a fire certificate an inspection should be made to ensure that dangerous conditions in case of fire do not apply in the relevant premises.

Nevertheless, we are concerned that there are a series of statutory duties contained in Section 5 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 that clearly set out a process for a fire and rescue authority to follow when dealing with applications for fire certificates. As a result we do not agree with areas of the guidance contained in the CFOA document and we are concerned that it was apparently issued without full stakeholder consultation. We are also deeply concerned that guidance of this nature was not issued by the Fire and Rescue Directorate of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

either as a Fire Precautions Act 1971 Circular, or a Fire and Rescue Service Circular.

In view of this the union wrote to the Minister on the 1st March 2005, a copy of our letter is attached at Appendix C. We asked two very simple questions of him being;

(a) was he content with the advice given to fire and rescue authorities by CFOA as his professional advisers with regard to the handling of applications for fire certificates, and  
 (b) was he confident that if a fire and rescue authority has taken the advice offered that they would not be in breach of their statutory duties under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 regarding the issue, exemption from and amendment of fire certificates by doing so?

On the 11th April 2005, we wrote again to the Minister reminding him of our previous letter and referring to the fact that he had not yet received a reply.

On the 26th April 2005 the union finally received a reply from Phil Hope MP at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which is shown in Appendix D. It is clear from the reply that CFOA and the ODPM collaborated on the CFOA guidance document and that CFOA issued it with the tacit approval and full knowledge of the ODPM. The real, question there is why did ODPM leave this matter to CFOA when they should have issued such guidance?

However, there also seems to be some nervousness regarding the guidance as the reply is certainly not as positive as the reply that the Minister, Nick Raynsford, gave in his written answer on 3 March 2005. This answer crossed over with our letter. We note that Phil Hope says only the Courts (or possibly a Judicial Review) can give a definitive ruling on the legislative accuracy of the guidance. This is a point that we fully appreciate and one which we would have thought the ODPM would have taken comprehensive legal advice upon before giving approval for publication of the guidance by CFOA.

It also seems peculiar that the ODPM took the opportunity to remove the fire certification Best Value Performance Indicator 147 (BVPI) which ensured that fire and rescue authorities had to record the number of fire certificates issued. BVPI 147 was the only fire safety enforcement activity record provided for the use of the Audit Commission in reviewing the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of a brigade and has not been replaced. Similarly, despite the fact that fire safety enforcement is an essential part of providing fire safety in England and Wales there is no Public Service Agreement (PSA) target for it.

We also note that Phil Hope says that it may be time for CFOA to review their policy statement and for Ministers to decide to ask them to do that after the election. Well, the Election is now over and once we know who the new Ministers are be assured that we will be asking them that question. We will let you

know what the answer is.

## APPENDIX A

### H of C Written Answers, Thursday 27 January 2005

#### Fire Service

**Mr. Clapham (Lab, Barnsley West & Penistone; Joint Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Fire Safety Group):** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he expects the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2004 to come into force; and what guidance he has given to fire and rescue authorities regarding the proper discharge of their statutory duties to enforce the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 in the interim period before the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2004 comes into force.

**Mr. Raynsford (Minster of State, ODPM):** The decision on an appropriate date for the coming into force of the proposed Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order has not yet been taken. The suite of guidance contained in Fire Precautions Act circulars stands good for the interim period. Supplementary advice on handling of applications for fire certificates has been issued, by the Chief Fire Officer's Association.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many (a) fire certificates have been (i) issued and (ii) amended and (b) exemptions from requirement to hold a fire certificate have been granted under the terms and conditions of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 by each fire and rescue authority in England and Wales in each year since 1999; and how many applications for the (A) issue and (B) amendment of a fire certificate by each fire and rescue authority were outstanding on 31 December 2004.

Mr. Raynsford: The number of fire certificates issued under the terms and conditions of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 by each fire and rescue authority in England and Wales in each year since 1999 are tabled as follows:

Number of Fire Precautions Act certificates issued in 1999-2000 to 2003-04	1999-2000	2003-2004	Difference	% Change
Avon	48	13	-35	-72.9
Beds & Luton	20	7	-13	-65.0
Buckinghamshire	101	38	-63	-67.3
Cambridgeshire	78	30	-48	-61.5
Cheshire	60	30	-30	-50.0
Cleveland	65	8	-57	-87.6
Cornwall	59	44	-15	-25.4
Co. Durham & Darlington	23	3	-20	-86.9
Cumbria	36	39	+3	+8.3
Derbyshire	75	24	-51	-68.0
Devon	108	66	-42	-38.8
Dorset	76	44	-32	-42.1
East Sussex	28	29	+1	+3.5
Essex	77	125	+48	+62.3
Gloucestershire	140	99	-41	-29.2
Greater Manchester	187	113	-74	-39.5
Hampshire	50	61	+11	+22.0
Hereford & Worcester	61	27	-34	-55.7
Hertfordshire	59	53	-6	-10.1
Humberside	103	46	-57	-55.3
Isle of Wight	15	6	-9	-60.0
Isles of Scilly	1	1	0	0
Kent	107	39	-68	-63.5
Lancashire	93	39	-54	-58.0
Leicestershire	50	19	-31	-62.0

Number of Fire Precautions Act certificates issued in 1999-2000 to 2003-04	1999-2000	2003-2004	Difference	% Change
Lincolnshire	15	18	+3	+20.0
London	602	272	-330	-54.8
Merseyside	54	34	-20	-37.0
Mid and West Wales	99	31	-68	-68.6
Norfolk	31	23	-8	-25.8
North Wales	44	11	-33	-75.0
North Yorkshire	75	29	-46	-61.3
Northamptonshire	14	15	+1	+7.14
Northumberland	10	0	-10	-100.0
Nottinghamshire	74	23	-51	-68.9
Oxfordshire	87	22	-65	-74.7
Royal Berkshire	48	72	+24	+50.0
Shropshire	18	9	-9	-50.0
Somerset	27	12	-15	-55.5
South Wales	89	41	-48	-53.9
South Yorkshire	50	53	+3	+6.0
Staffordshire	89	24	-65	-73.0
Suffolk	14	29	+15	+107.1
Surrey	73	41	-32	-43.8
Tyne and Wear	67	57	-10	-14.9
Warwickshire	33	19	-14	-42.4
West Midlands	107	11	-96	-89.7
West Sussex	79	29	-50	-63.2
West Yorkshire	124	50	-74	-59.6
Wiltshire	37	19	-18	-48.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,680</b>	<b>1,947</b>	<b>-1733</b>	<b>-47.1</b>

Records are not kept of either amended fire certificates issued or outstanding applications for amended certificates. Any amended certificates issued are counted in with fire certificates issued. In respect of outstanding applications for amended certificates, there is no statutory requirement for owners/occupiers of certified premises to apply for amended certificates. Section 8 of the Fire Precautions Act requires the owner/occupier to inform the fire authority of any material structural changes to the building. The fire authority then has a duty, if satisfied with the proposals, either to amend the fire certificate or issue a new one. If not satisfied, the fire authority must issue a notice of steps to be taken before amending or issuing a new fire certificate.

## APPENDIX B

### H of C Written Answers - Wednesday 2nd March 2005:

**Mike Clapham:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his answer of 27 January, Official Report, columns 462-63W, on the fire service, how many applications for new fire certificates in each brigade requested between 1999 and 2004 remain outstanding; what assessment he has made of the guidance issued by the Chief Fire Officers' Association to fire and rescue authorities regarding the processing of applications for fire certificates; and whether the guidance is publicly available.

Nick Raynsford: The numbers of valid applications for fire certificates, and the number of applications outstanding at the end of each of the years requested, is given in Table 1 for England and Wales. Data on the age of outstanding applications is not collected centrally. However, average times taken to issue of fire certificates in England and Wales for the last year for which figures are available are given in Table 2.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister reviewed the guidance promulgated to fire and

rescue authorities by the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) and made the assessment that it was consistent with the legal obligations of fire and rescue authorities and others concerned.

CFOA are arranging for the guidance to be placed on a publicly available part of the CFOA website as soon as possible. Meanwhile copies of the CFOA guidance circular have been made available in the Library of the House.

TABLE 1		
1 April to 31 March	Valid applications received	Outstanding applications at end of year
1999-2000	4,932	1,650
2000-01	4,897	1,414
2001-02	4,920	1,348
2002-03	4,224	1,216
2003-04	3,361	1,240

Table 2						
BV 14— average time taken by fire authorities to issue fire safety certificates						
	Number of certificates issued	Number of days to issue certificates	Average time in days			
			2002	2002	2002	2001
	-03	-03	-03	-02	-02	-01
Shropshire	17	119	7	11	11	
Cheshire	34	551	16	34	31	
Merseyside	22	480	22	52	16	
Staffordshire	34	760	22	19	18	
Mid and West Wales	50	1,211	24	25	27	
Gloucestershire	129	3,574	28	21	18	
Derbyshire	40	1,229	31	73	62	
Dorset	63	2,006	32	44	44	
Warwickshire	25	822	33	27	63	
Tyne and Wear	48	1,609	34	52	65	
West Yorkshire	51	1,842	36	70	54	
Humberside	65	2,353	36	39	32	
Lincolnshire	5	188	38	37	93	
South Yorkshire	46	1,890	41	59	68	
Hereford & Wors	25	1,086	43	82	104	
Buckinghamshire	47	2,119	45	82	86	
Kent	66	3,018	46	66	53	
Cumbria	28	1,316	47	105	80	
Essex	99	4,752	48	n/a	143	
East Sussex	22	1,120	51	51	51	
Cleveland	18	957	53	46	67	
Northumberland	6	319	53	25	58	
<b>Upper quartile boundary1</b>						
Devon	41	2,240	55	84	66	
Somerset	14	839	60	160	14	
Norfolk	25	1,542	62	30	161	
Beds & Luton	15	985	66	65	63	
Suffolk	9	607	67	67	46	
Nottinghamshire	22	1,520	69	92	77	
North Yorkshire	54	4,093	76	148	60	
Lancashire	32	2,474	77	74	131	
Cornwall	37	3,143	85	92	97	
North Wales	19	1,614	85	84	55	
Isle Of Wight	3	255	85	37	76	
Cambridgeshire	44	4,084	93	148	74	
Co Durham & D'lington	18	1,782	99	123	87	
West Midlands	71	7,191	101	98	92	
Northamptonshire	17	1,748	103	85	145	
Royal Berkshire	52	5,470	105	97	106	
West Sussex	58	6,641	115	165	175	
South Wales	63	7,299	116	55	90	
Leicestershire	12	1,392	116	181	136	
Hertfordshire	65	7,735	119	209	122	
Hampshire	100	12,891	129	86	53	
Greater Manchester	108	14,578	135	131	99	
Wiltshire	29	4,232	146	103	n/a	
Oxfordshire	26	4,456	171	210	77	
Surrey	26	5,434	209	136	125	
London	226	48,364	214	208	152	
Avon	18	5,687	316	214	68	

n/a = not available.

(22) The upper quartile boundary is set at 53 using 2000-01 as the base date.

## APPENDIX C

The letter sent from General Secretary of the FBU, Andy Gilchrist, to Minister (Nick Raynsford) on the 1st March 2005.



## The Fire Brigades Union

GENERAL SECRETARY : ANDY GILCHRIST

Established 1918

BRADLEY HOUSE, 68 COOMBE ROAD, KINGSTON UPON THAMES, SURREY KT2 7AE

Please quote this reference on all replies:

Telephone: 020-8541 1765

Faximile: 020-8546 5187

E-mail: office@fbu-ho.org.uk

Our Ref: AG/sr

1 March 2005

Rt. Hon. Nick Raynsford MP  
Minister of State  
Local Government and the Regions  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
26 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2WH

Dear Nick

### CACFOA Document - Fire Certificates - Transitional Arrangements

I refer to a recent written reply that you gave on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2005 to a Parliamentary Question set down by Mick Clapham MP which asked, amongst other things, what guidance had been given by the Deputy Prime Minister to fire and rescue authorities regarding the proper discharge of their statutory duties to enforce the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 in the interim period before the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order comes into force.

In reply to that part of the Question you said that the suite of guidance contained in Fire Precautions Act circulars stands good for the interim period. Supplementary advice on handling of applications for fire certificates has been issued, by the Chief Fire Officer's Association.

The CACFOA (now CFOA) supplementary advice document to which you refer and I assume your officials have seen was agreed by their National Fire Safety Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2003. It recommends that because there was an anticipation by them that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order would come into force in autumn 2004 and subject to individual fire authorities obtaining their own legal advice on the matter that all work associated with the preparation, issue and amendment of fire certificates be 'on hold' as from 1 January 2004. This may explain why there has been a significant drop in the numbers of fire certificates issued by some Brigades in 2004.

As I understand it the CFOA advice still remains in force even though the coming into force date for the Order is now 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006. In view of this my question to you is twofold, but very simple and as follows, are you content with the advice given to fire and rescue authorities by CFOA as your professional advisers with regard to the handling of applications for fire certificates and are you confident that if a fire and rescue authority has taken the advice offered that they would not be in breach of their statutory duties under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 regarding the issue, exemption from and amendment of fire certificates by doing so?

I look forward to receiving your views on this matter in due course.

Yours sincerely,

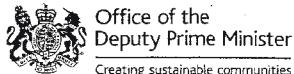
ANDY GILCHRIST  
GENERAL SECRETARY

### Copies to

Bro. Mike Fordham Assistant General Secretary  
Bro. Glyn Evans National Fire Safety Adviser  
Bro. Dave Beverley ONC Fire Safety Sub Committee

## APPENDIX D

### Reply from Phil Hope MP at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister



Phil Hope MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
26 Whitehall, London SW1A 2WH

Tel: 020 7944 4400 Fax: 020 7944 4339  
E-Mail: phil.hope@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

Our Ref: R/PH/004314/05  
Your Ref: AG/sr

26 APR 2005

Andy Gilchrist  
General Secretary  
Fire Brigades Union  
Bradley House  
68 Coombe Road  
Kingston upon Thames  
SURREY KT2 7AE

Dear Andy

Thank you for your letter of 1 March regarding the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) policy document on the handling of applications for fire certificates. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

You ask two specific questions - am I content with the advice given to fire and rescue authorities by CFOA with regard to the handling of applications for fire certificates?; and am I content that if a fire and rescue authority has taken the advice offered that they would not be in breach of their statutory duties under the Fire Precautions Act 1971?

When we reviewed the guidance before it was issued by CFOA the proposed arrangement for handling applications for fire certificates was seen as a reasonable short term transitional measure, which ensured the safety of premises through the inspection of premises, though the physical issue of a certificate is only actioned if the applicant asks that it be (and so incurs the commensurate charges). It remains, of course, for each authority to satisfy itself that it is appropriate to accept and make use of CFOA's advice.

As to whether fire and rescue authorities would be in breach of their statutory duties, you will appreciate that only the Courts can give a definitive ruling on that. It is for each authority, with the benefit of advice from their own legal advisers to decide if they are satisfied they will be properly exercising their duties. For example one factor will be whether an appropriate balance has been struck between the various statutory functions the fire and rescue authority is required to perform. This latter point is one that will be considered through Comprehensive Performance Assessment by the Audit Commission and we will be working to assist fire and rescue authorities in the light of the Audit Commissions reports - when they are available.

As I have said, the CFOA arrangements seemed reasonable as a short term transitional arrangement. However, the guidance has been in place for some time and, as we have set a firm date for the coming into force of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (assuming that it passes through the remaining stages of approval to make it law), it may be time for CFOA to review their policy statement. It will be for Ministers to decide whether to ask them to do this, after the Election.

Tas ect

PH

PHIL HOPE

# Helping someone who can't help themselves

***My elderly mother is becoming confused and finding it increasingly difficult to deal with her affairs. I have tried to help but found that her bank will not deal with me unless I get a legal document. How do I go about getting this?***

If a person thinks they are likely to become mentally incapable of handling their own affairs, they can appoint another person to handle things for them when the time comes. This is called 'enduring power of attorney' (EPA).

This can only be done if the person (the donor) understands the process at the time they sign the form to give the power.

EPA only begins when the donor is certified as mentally incapable by a doctor. Until then, the person is legally capable of dealing with their own affairs.

The power then begins when it is registered at the Court of Protection (COP). There's a pre-printed form available from legal stationers and the Public Guardianship Office on 0845 330 2900 (PGO).

If a person is already mentally incapable, they cannot legally give EPA. If EPA has not already been granted, the COP will have to appoint someone called a receiver. They are required by the court to collect someone's income, pay bills and administer the donor's affairs. The next of kin or nearest relative willing to deal with their affairs can apply.

If there's no-one suitable to act on the person's behalf, a public trustee may be appointed by the court.

The PGO is responsible for the supervision of receivers and it also gives help with applications.

To apply and/or get details of EPA and Receivership, call the PGO on:

**020 7664 7000 (for general enquiries) or**

**0845 330 2900 (for application packs)**

You can download some forms from [www.guardianship.gov.uk](http://www.guardianship.gov.uk)

Each year the FBU handles thousands of legal problems on behalf of members. Here are just two issues that have cropped up

***My mother has just died and she owned her own property. I am unsure if there was a will, what do I need to do to deal with her affairs?***

When a person dies, legal authority is required to act on behalf of that person. This is known as a 'grant of representation'. There are two types of grant of representation:

- Probate, given to a person named in a will as an executor. The will must be registered at the probate registry.
- Letters of administration, given if there is no valid will.

In both cases the person dealing with the deceased's estate is named the personal representative. The role of representative is to gather together the estate of the deceased, pay outstanding bills, distribute property and possessions and pay any inheritance tax due.

A grant of probate is a High Court document issued by the probate registry, although sometimes it is not always necessary to acquire this. Probate is always needed wherever the estate is made up of:

- freehold or leasehold property
- investments
- insurance and pension benefits.

There is also an order of priority as to who can apply if there is no named executor. First is any beneficiary where there is a will but the executors are not named or cannot or are unwilling to act.

Then, in order, come the remaining married partner, children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, nephews or nieces, then any other relatives of the person who has died.

Unmarried partners not named as an executor will not be able to act unless doing so on behalf of a child of the deceased aged under 18.

There is no obligation to use a solicitor. If one is used their fees are paid out of the estate.

**To apply and find your nearest probate registry, call the central number on 020 7947 6000 or visit [www.courtservice.gov.uk/cms/3724.htm](http://www.courtservice.gov.uk/cms/3724.htm)**

# 25-YEAR BADGES



John Chambers, Blue Watch Tooting, receives his 25 year badge from station rep Gary Hillier



Ken Priss, Blue Watch Tooting, receives his 25 year badge from station rep Gary Hillier



Roy Sawh, Blue Watch Tooting, receives his 25 year badge from station rep Gary Hillier



Stn.O Alan Keenan (green watch) being presented with his 25yr badge by branch chair Kenny O'Neill (white watch) at CO2 Barrhead



F/f Mario Stango on left receiving medal from Paul Stanbridge (Herts H&S Rep) at Bishops Stortford Station



Paul Stanbridge on the left (H&S Rep Herts) presenting 25 year badge to Roy Oliver at Hemel Hempstead



Sub/O Dave Greaves on left receiving medal from Ben Read (Herts Membership Sec) at Bishops Stortford Station

Please send your photographic prints or digital picture files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk (Please note that inkjet prints from digital pictures reproduce very poorly). Please include **FULL DETAILS** for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their **station/ watch etc**; where they are in the picture (e.g. :left to right ...); their **union posts/branch** if relevant; and where and when it was taken.

## ELECTION OF GENERAL SECRETARY

In the election for General Secretary, the scrutineers have declared the result of the ballot as follows:

### Election of General Secretary

My independent scrutineer's report of voting in the above election, which closed at 2.00 pm on Friday 6 May 2005, is as follows:

Number of voting papers returned: 20,663

Number of papers found to be invalid (blank/spoilt): 571

Thus, total number of valid papers to be counted: 20,092

### Result (1 to elect):

Brother Matt Wrack 12,833 ELECTED

Brother Andy Gilchrist 7,259

The ballot papers will be stored securely for a period of twelve months before being destroyed.

Certified by: ELECTORAL REFORM SERVICES 6 May 2005

I am therefore pleased to declare that Brother Matt Wrack is elected as General Secretary.

**MIKE FORDHAM, Assistant General Secretary**

# 0808 100 6061 FBU

## freephone legal advice line



The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues. For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

**For further help and advice on union services contact your regional office**

Regional Office	Address	Telephone No.	Email address
Region 1 Scotland	52 St Enoch Square, Glasgow, Scotland, G1 4AA	0141 221 2309	01rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 2 N. Ireland	14 Bachelors Walk, Lisburn, Co Antrim, BT28 1XJ	02892 664622	02rs@fbu.org
Region 3 Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	1 Carlton Court, 5th Avenue, Team Valley, Gateshead, NE11 0AZ	0191 487 4142	03rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 4 Yorkshire and Humberside	9 Marsh Street, Rothwell, Leeds, LS26 0AG	0113 288 7000	04rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 5 Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Isle of Man, Cumbria, Merseyside, Cheshire	The Lighthouse, Lower Mersey St, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 2AL	0151 357 4400	05rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 6 Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire	Mill 3, Unit H3B, Pleasley Vale Business Park, Off Outgang Lane, Pleasley, Nr Mansfield, Nottingham, NG19 8RL	01623 812290	06gen@fbu.org.uk
Region 7 West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Hereford and Worcester, Salop	195/7 Halesowen Rd, Old Hill, West Midlands, B64 6HE	01384 413633	07rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 8 Gwynedd, Clwyd, Dyfed, Powys, Glamorgan, Gwent	Units 38 – 40, Port Talbot Bus. Units, Addison Road, Port Talbot, SA12 6HZ	01639 871013	08rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 9 Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk	28 Atlantic Square, Station Road, Witham, Essex, CM8 2TL	01376 521521	10ra@fbu.org.uk 09rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 10 London	John Horner Mews, Frome Street, Islington, London, N1 8PB	020 7359 3638	london@fbu.org.uk
Region 11 Kent, Surrey, Sussex	Fire Station, Coldharbour Road, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8NT	01474 320473	11rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 12 Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Isle of Wight	The Fire Station, St Mary Street, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP11 2HE	01494 513034	12rs@fbu.org.uk
Region 13 Cornwall, Somerset, Devon, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset	158 Muller Road, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9RE	0117 935 5132	13rs@fbu.org.uk

## on the move?

office@fbu.org.uk  
www.fbu.org.uk

Advise your Brigade  
Membership Secretary of any  
change of address and Head  
Office of changes to next of kin  
or nominations for benefits.

